

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing sponsorships comprising the steps of:
receiving, at a computer network site, a request for sponsorship from a requestor;
responding to the request by sending one of an approval and a rejection;
if an approval is sent, further requiring the requestor to accept an agreement;
receiving the requestor's acceptance of the agreement; and
providing the requestor with access to content through the site.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of monitoring the requestor's actual use of the content.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of monitoring comprises the steps of:
sending a communication to the requestor asking for a sample use of the content;
receiving the sample use from the requestor; and
determining whether the sample use complies with the agreement.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein if the sample use does not comply with the agreement, the method further comprises the step of sending a communication to the requestor citing improper use of the content.
5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of terminating the requestor's access to the content through the site.
6. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of:
sending a second communication to the requestor asking for a second sample use of the content;
receiving the second sample use from the requestor; and

determining whether the second sample use complies with the agreement.

7. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of repeating the steps of sending the communication, receiving the sample use, and determining whether the sample use complies with the agreement, until the sample use complies with the agreement or until a predetermined number of noncompliant uses have been received.

8. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

repeating the steps of sending the communication, receiving the sample use, and determining whether the sample use complies with the agreement; and

if more than a predetermined number of sample uses have been determined not to comply with the agreement, terminating the requestor's access to the content through the site.

9. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of archiving the sample use.

10. The method of claim 3, wherein if the sample use complies with the agreement, the method further comprises the step of archiving the compliance of the sample use.

11. The method of claim 3, wherein the communication is an electronic communication comprising one of a computer network page, a message posted on a computer network page, and an e-mail message.

12. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of determining comprises analyzing the sample use with image recognition software.

13. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of monitoring comprises the steps of:

sending an electronic communication to the requestor asking for a sample use of the content; and

if no sample is received from the requestor, terminating the requestor's access to the content through the site.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the request includes one or more of a name of the requestor, an address of the requestor, a telephone number of the requestor, a description of an event for which a sponsorship is sought, a date and duration of the event, an e-mail address of the requestor, a requested donation amount, a name of a contact person who directed the requestor to the site, and a password for accessing secured pages of the site.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of responding comprises the steps of:
releasing a payment to the requestor for the requested donation amount; and
activating the password.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of responding comprises the steps of:
receiving a payment from the requestor; and
activating the password.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the content is one of a trademark, a logo, and a copyrighted material.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the request is one of an e-mail message and an online form completed on the site.

19. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of monitoring comprises tracking which content is accessed by the requestor.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein tracking comprises recording, at a point when the requestor attempts to access a secured page of the site, at least one of an Internet Protocol

address of the requestor, an access status, a date of the attempted access, a profile identification of the requestor, and an identification of the secured page.

21. A system for managing a sponsorship between a sponsor and a requestor comprising:

(a) a content database containing protected content of the sponsor;

(b) a terms and conditions database containing an agreement that the requestor must accept before gaining access to the protected content; and

(c) a sponsor application adapted to communicate with a computer of the requestor through a computer network, to receive a request for sponsorship from the requestor, to respond to the request with one of an approval and a refusal, to retrieve the agreement from the terms and conditions database, to present the agreement to the requestor, to receive one of an acceptance and a denial of the terms and conditions from the requestor, to retrieve the protected content from the content database, to download the protected content to the requestor after the requestor has accepted the terms and conditions, to request and receive a sample use of the protected content from the requestor, and to analyze whether the sample use complies with the agreement.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the sponsor application is further adapted to exchange e-mail messages with the requestor's computer,

wherein the request and receipt of the sample use are e-mail messages.

23. The system of claim 21, further comprising:

(d) a requestor information database containing data associated with the requestor.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein the request includes data including one or more of a name of the requestor, an address of the requestor, a telephone number of the requestor, a description of an event for which the sponsorship is sought, a date and duration of the event, an

e-mail address of the requestor, a requested donation amount, a name of a contact person who directed the requestor to the site, and a password for accessing secured pages posted by the network application, and

wherein the network application stores the data in the requestor information database.

25. The system of claim 23, wherein the sponsor application is further adapted to archive the sample use in the requestor information database.

26. The system of claim 23, wherein the sponsor application is further adapted to archive in the requestor information database the requestor's response to the terms and conditions.

27. The system of claim 23, wherein the sponsor application is further adapted to archive in the requestor information database whether the sample use complies with the agreement.

28. The system of claim 23, wherein the sponsor application is further adapted to archive in the requestor information database whether the sample use has been received from the requestor.

29. The system of claim 21, wherein the protected content is one of a trademark, a logo, and a copyrighted material.

30. A method for controlling use of protected content comprising the steps of:

storing the protected content on a server;

receiving, from a requestor, a request to use the protected content;

receiving information about the requestor;

electronically generating and sending to the requestor an agreement defining conditions

for using the protected content;

receiving an electronic acceptance of the agreement from the requestor;

providing the requestor with electronic access to the protected content; and

electronically generating and sending an audit request to the requestor asking for a sample use of the protected content.

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of electronically receiving from the requestor the sample use of the protected content.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of manually evaluating the sample use.

33. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of electronically determining whether the sample use complies with the agreement.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein the step of electronically determining comprises analyzing the sample use with image recognition software.

35. The method of claim 33, wherein if the sample use does not comply with the agreement, the method further comprises the steps of:

sending the requestor an electronic message stating that the sample use does not comply with the agreement; and

terminating the requestor's electronic access to the protected content.

36. The method of claim 30, wherein the protected content is one of a trademark, a logo, and a copyrighted material.

37. The method of claim 30, wherein the step of providing the electronic access occurs only if the electronic acceptance has been received.

38. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of storing the sample use on the server.

39. A method for managing a sponsorship by a sponsor comprising the steps of:

receiving, from a requestor, a request for sponsorship at a computer network site;

receiving, at the site, from the requestor, a name of a contact person who directed the requestor to the site;

receiving, at the site, information about the requested sponsorship from the requestor;

evaluating the request for sponsorship;

sending an electronic communication to the requestor indicating whether the request for sponsorship is approved; and

if the request is approved, providing the requestor with access to protected content of the sponsor.

40. The method of claim 39, determining an origin of the request from the name of the contact person.

41. The method of claim 39, wherein the protected content is adapted to advertise the sponsorship.

42. The method of claim 39, wherein the electronic communication is one of an e-mail message and a message posted on the site.

43. The method of claim 39, wherein the step of evaluating comprises electronically comparing the request against a list of approved requestors and prescribed donation limits.

44. The method of claim 39, wherein if the request is approved, the method further comprises the step of receiving a payment from the requestor for the sponsorship.

45. The method of claim 39, wherein if the request is approved, the method further comprises the step of releasing a payment to the requestor for the sponsorship.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein a password is associated with the payment, and wherein the password provides the access to the protected content.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein the password is at least one of a number of a paper check and a code of an electronic payment.

48. The method of claim 39, wherein the step of providing the requestor with access comprises requiring the requestor to indicate, through the site, acceptance of terms and conditions for the use of the protected content.

49. The method of claim 39, wherein if the request is approved, the method further comprises the steps of:

 sending an electronic communication to the requestor asking for a sample use of the protected content; and

 receiving through the site from the requestor the sample use.

50. The method of claim 48, wherein if the request is approved, the method further comprises the steps of:

 sending an electronic communication to the requestor asking for a sample use of the protected content;

 receiving through the site from the requestor the sample use;

 determining whether the sample use complies with the terms and conditions; and

 sending an electronic communication to the requestor indicating whether the sample use complies with the terms and conditions.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the step of determining whether the sample use complies comprises analyzing the sample use with image recognition software.

52. The method of claim 50, wherein the step of determining whether the sample use complies comprises manually inspecting the sample use.